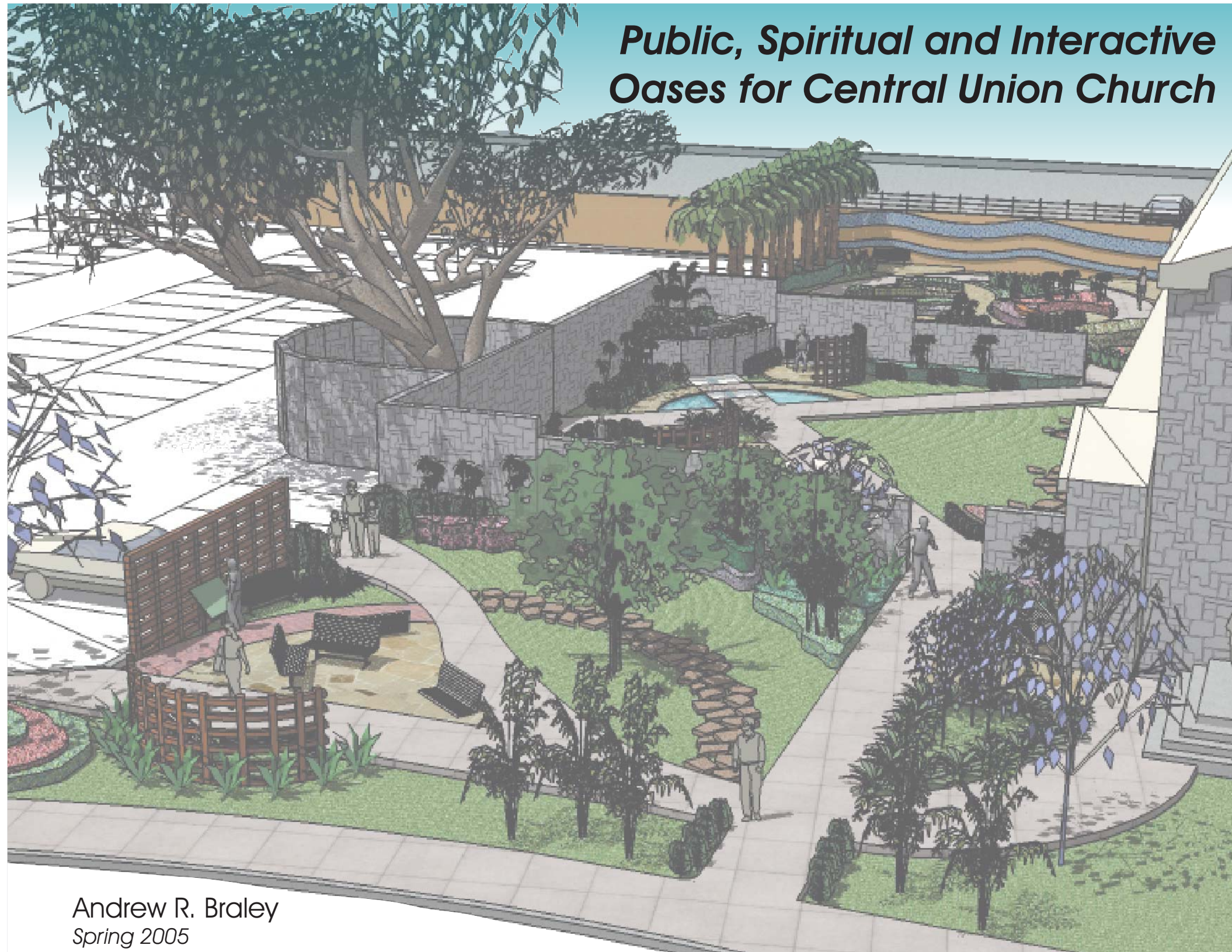


***Public, Spiritual and Interactive  
Oases for Central Union Church***



Andrew R. Braley  
Spring 2005







*"Nature is but another name for health"*  
- Henry David Thoreau



## ***Public, Spiritual and Interactive Oases for Central Union Church***

**Andrew R. Braley**

*LA 404 - Comprehensive Project  
Ball State University  
Department of Landscape Architecture  
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## Abstract

1

The creation of public, spiritual and interactive oases for Central Union Church was based on the following vision:

*Located in Honolulu, Hawaii, Central Union Church will benefit from a series of garden oases. Central Union will also be able to continue to reach out and serve the surrounding community by offering gardens which allow contemplation, education, spiritual, physical or mental healing, or just a space to sit and relax for a few minutes.*

Presently, Central Union does not have anywhere on their 8.4-acre campus designated as a garden or courtyard space for the congregation or community to come in and relax, be alone or recreate.

In the following pages, are conceptual ideas and schematic design for three new spaces on the church campus. The final images and views were all created in a 3-D modeling program called SketchUp. Created from the base information in AutoCAD, this format helped to visualize the overall design of these three new oases for Central Union Church.







## Introduction

Landscapes have the ability to aid in the healing process and also serve as a great educational tool to people of all ages. “When the mind is focused on healing, the body responds”, says Clare Cooper Marcus, a well-respected leader in the study of healing gardens. “The common use of the word ‘healing’ is quite broad and generally refers to a beneficial process that promotes overall well-being” (Marcus, 1999). She goes on to say that there are several “enhancements to well-being” including “relief from physical symptoms... stress reduction... [and] an improvement in the overall sense of well-being” (Marcus, 1999). So whether it is healing from abuse, cancer treatment, mental and spiritual healing, or therapy and healing from a surgical procedure, landscapes can provide that positive influence and affect the way a person or group of people is feeling physically, mentally and/or emotionally. Healing and recovery can be a very long, arduous process, but if patients spend time in healing environments it has been proven that this will help decrease the amount of time patients spend in rehabilitation environments.

Most times, healing is associated with illness or injury, but there is also the aspect of spiritual healing which often takes place on church grounds, whether it is the main sanctuary, a minister’s office, or the comfort of a garden with contemplative and reflective spaces. “In the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic religions, paradise is symbolized by a garden” (Marcus, 1999). Thus throughout history, it is evident that experiencing nature through the form of a garden has been a type of goal that people have set for themselves to achieve, as they wish to seek that ultimate place of “paradise”.

Central Union Church in Honolulu, Hawaii has a fantastic opportunity that I would like to fully exploit and take advantage of, in that it is located adjacent to two different hospitals, and also home to a preschool. None of these places has any sort of healing or spiritual garden on their grounds, and thus Central Union Church is the perfect location for such a place.

Through careful site design and plant selection, this garden would be an excellent addition and asset to the surrounding community and create a unique outlet for those seeking healing, education, or tranquility.

## Healing Garden - Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center

Phoenix, Arizona

A good example of a healing garden can be seen at the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. The project is relatively square in construction and approximately 12,000-14,000 square feet (Figure 1).

An interesting aspect to this project is that formerly it was a courtyard with not much to offer: Concrete planters, boring plants, stark environment, and a smoking area. In 1996, at the suggestion of Sandra Brown, the Director of Patient Relations, the hospital decided to redesign the courtyard. The redesign was based on some of their new practices and programs that were being brought into the hospital life through the Healing Environment Committee.

4 As you enter the site, there is a great water feature, themed “the cycle of life” with the three pools symbolizing “the source”-birth, “the water course”-life’s paths, and “the return”-end of life (Figure 4). Many different elements were incorporated in the design. The plant selection was especially focused on low water-use, low maintenance, historic medicinal uses, color, blooms, fragrance and at times attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. Art was also included in the design, through colorful mosaic tiled columns of ceramic, glass, and shells (Figure 2). Some of the columns have phrases and quotes as well.

There are a number of different sized spaces within the garden that allow for privacy or allow for larger groups to gather. As seen in Figures 2, 3 and 4, relatives are waiting outside in the garden while a family member undergoes treatment and/or other procedures to help distract them, pass the time and relax outside of the hospital environment. The site is completely accessible to all modes of transportation: wheelchairs, walkers, gurneys, beds, etc. At times, a small symphony will gather in there and play music for the patients and families in a portion of the courtyard area. While requests have been made by the public to use the space for weddings, receptions, etc. the hospital has decided this would break the integrity and intent of the garden.

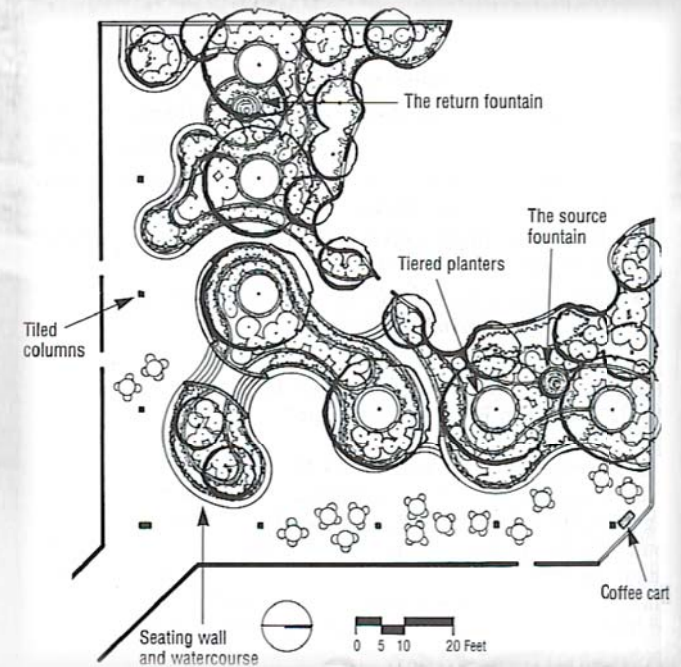


Figure 1 - Plan view of Healing Garden



## Healing Garden - Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center

Phoenix, Arizona



Figure 2 - Staff on a lunch break



Figure 3 - Child in garden



Figure 4 - Family in garden near water feature

### There are many positive elements within the site including:

- Sound of water is in many parts of garden
- Plant palette appropriate to region
- Plants which attract birds and butterflies; reflect changing seasons; are labeled for education
- Variety of seating is available; some seating in sun, some in shade
- Garden available to all patients, staff and visitors 24 hours per day
  - Easy to see and approach from main entry of the hospital
  - Outstanding views from patient rooms to garden.

### Negative elements on the site include:

- The extent of concrete slightly detracts from the garden feel of the courtyard
- Too much glare. Tinting concrete floor could help. Integral color concrete was used, but has faded considerably over time



## Healing Garden - Good Samaritan Hospital

Portland, Oregon

Another prime example of a healing garden is located in Portland, Oregon at another Good Samaritan Hospital. It is also a little smaller in size, as its dimensions are roughly 50' x 150', for a total area of approximately 7,500 square feet (Figure 5).

In the late 1990s, a new entry foyer was built by architects Mic and Connie Johnson. The administration set aside \$14,000 to remove an asphalt parking lot adjacent to the entry building and to incorporate low-maintenance shrubs and concrete paths to facilitate movement between buildings. It was at this point that the Therapeutic Garden Design Team, a hospital committee, then decided that much more could be done with the area than was being proposed.

"The configuration of the garden that developed from staff input included the idea of two large and one smaller raised concrete planters, both richly planted; pathways, designed to slow people down, that curve around and between the planters; ground-level planting along the garden's southern edge; and a small plaza with seven garden benches at its western end."

6

Within the site, "a number of different theme sections were created: a perennial garden, a butterfly garden, a fragrant garden, a miniature rose garden, and two northwest native plant gardens." The theming of garden spaces is another element being considered conceptually for the new therapeutic oasis.

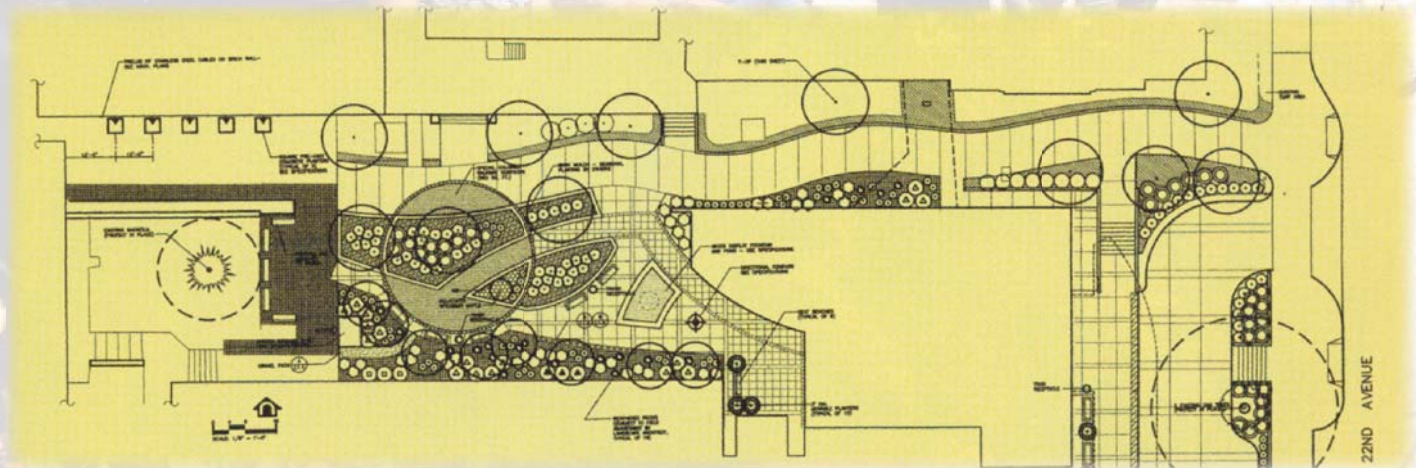


Figure 5 - Plan view of healing garden





Figure 6 - Aerial of Healing Garden

## Healing Garden - Good Samaritan Hospital Portland, Oregon

### The garden has several positive features:

- Themed sections: perennial, butterfly, fragrant and other gardens
  - Visible from the ground floor cafeteria
  - Accessible via glass doors from the main foyer
- Greenery and colorful banners advertise and grab interest of passersby
  - Benches throughout the garden encourage socializing
- Demonstration garden to educate and provide free plant material for the hospital to use

### Some less positive points included:

- Missing a water feature – was in the plans, but taken out due to budget
  - All concrete walks, need some gravel to practice walking on
  - Spacing of bricks after granite is tripping hazard
  - Finished work of the planter walls is too rough



Figure 7 - Users enjoying shaded area



## Children's Garden - Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital

Portland, Oregon

One last example of a garden designed for healing is the Children's Garden at Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital in Portland, Oregon. Approximately 11,000 square feet, the garden was design by architects Mic and Connie Johnson, as well as landscape architect Gretchen Vadnais.

The hospital was going through some upgrades to their pediatric facilities and connections between other wings of the hospital. "Visible through the windows of the new corridor was an unkempt courtyard with a soggy patch of lawn. The CEO of Legacy Health System, John G. King, was moving the hospital toward more patient-centered care; creating a new garden in the courtyard fit in with this goal." As the garden now exists, the views out of windows are much more pleasing to patients and families (Figure 12).

A triangular courtyard bounded by glass-sided corridors. The garden has an "easily negotiated layout of a figure-eight path winding through a richly planted landscape" (Figure 8). A large plum tree helps reduce the scale of the surrounding 5-story buildings. There are also five subareas which allow for groups to gather together, or allow for intimate private gatherings. Vegetative screening helps to separate these areas from public viewing.

Wooden benches are placed through the garden and are more accommodating and comfortable to those who may have lost some muscle mass than a steel bench might be. There is educational signage about the various plant materials around the garden that allows for interaction of patients and nature. It also helps the families and patients converse about topics other than their test results or upcoming procedures. Throughout the garden are interactive elements for little patients and siblings to enjoy (Figures 10, 11, 13). Again the ability to navigate the garden regardless of mode of transport is key (Figure 9).

Figure 8 - Plan view of children's garden



## ***Children's Garden - Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital***

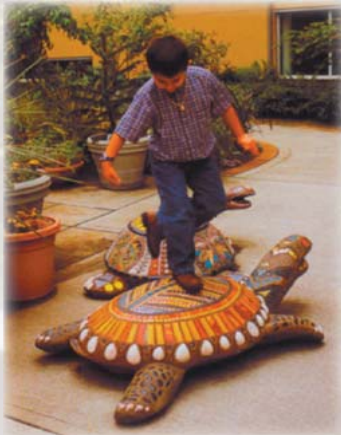
*Portland, Oregon*



**Figure 9** - Access for all users is important



**Figure 11** - Interactive elements in garden



**Figure 10** - Interactive elements



**Figure 12** - View from patient room to garden



**Figure 13** - Child interaction with garden element

**Some useful elements within the garden and many others that have been examined include:**

- Plant labels with Latin and common names, and brief summaries of growing habits
- Patients are able to help in maintaining garden by using watering cans
- Bird feeders and nesting boxes
- Tile wall decoration

## Site Context

Site location: City & County of Honolulu; Island of O'ahu; Near Downtown Honolulu

When choosing this site, there were several performance standards the site needed to possess.

These standards were:

- open space available for a garden
- users nearby at all times
- good exposure to the sun
- accessibility or the ability to create accessibility

The site chosen for the development and design of this therapeutic and healing garden should be located within the 8.4-acre campus of Central Union Church in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The land is zoned as apartments, and zoned more specifically as A-2 medium density apartments.

### Surrounding uses

Central Union Church (CUC) sits on the corner of South Beretania and Punahou Streets (Figure 16). Directly north of the campus is Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children is "one of the Pacific region's leaders in the care of women and children, with 232 beds and 90 bassinets. As the Regional Perinatal Center of the Pacific, this institution annually conducts more than \$2 million in research activity, and is a major teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine" (Kapiolani Health, 1998).

Across from Kapiolani Medical Center, to the west, is Honolulu Shriners Hospital for Children. "... Honolulu Shriners Hospital for Children is one of 22 Shriners Pediatric care facilities located in Hawaii, Canada, and Mexico and throughout the U.S. More than 20,000 children from Hawaii and across the Pacific Basin have received world-class orthopedic care for no cost at the Honolulu Shriners Hospital since it was established in 1923" (Shriners International, 2003).

Some of the other buildings and uses that surround the CUC campus include very high end apartments (Courtyards at Punahou). This condominium complex sits directly east of the campus, rising 12 stories in the air. The upper penthouse condos are in the range of \$1.5 to 2 million but provide an amazing view of much of Honolulu. Also in the vicinity are about 15-20 other housing complexes of varying price range and quality.

The site is about a 10-15 minute walk away from several schools, including Maryknoll a small co-educational Catholic school, and Punahou, a much larger private school that is one of the elite institutions in the state.



Figure 14 - Hawaiian Island Chain



Figure 15 - Island of O'ahu



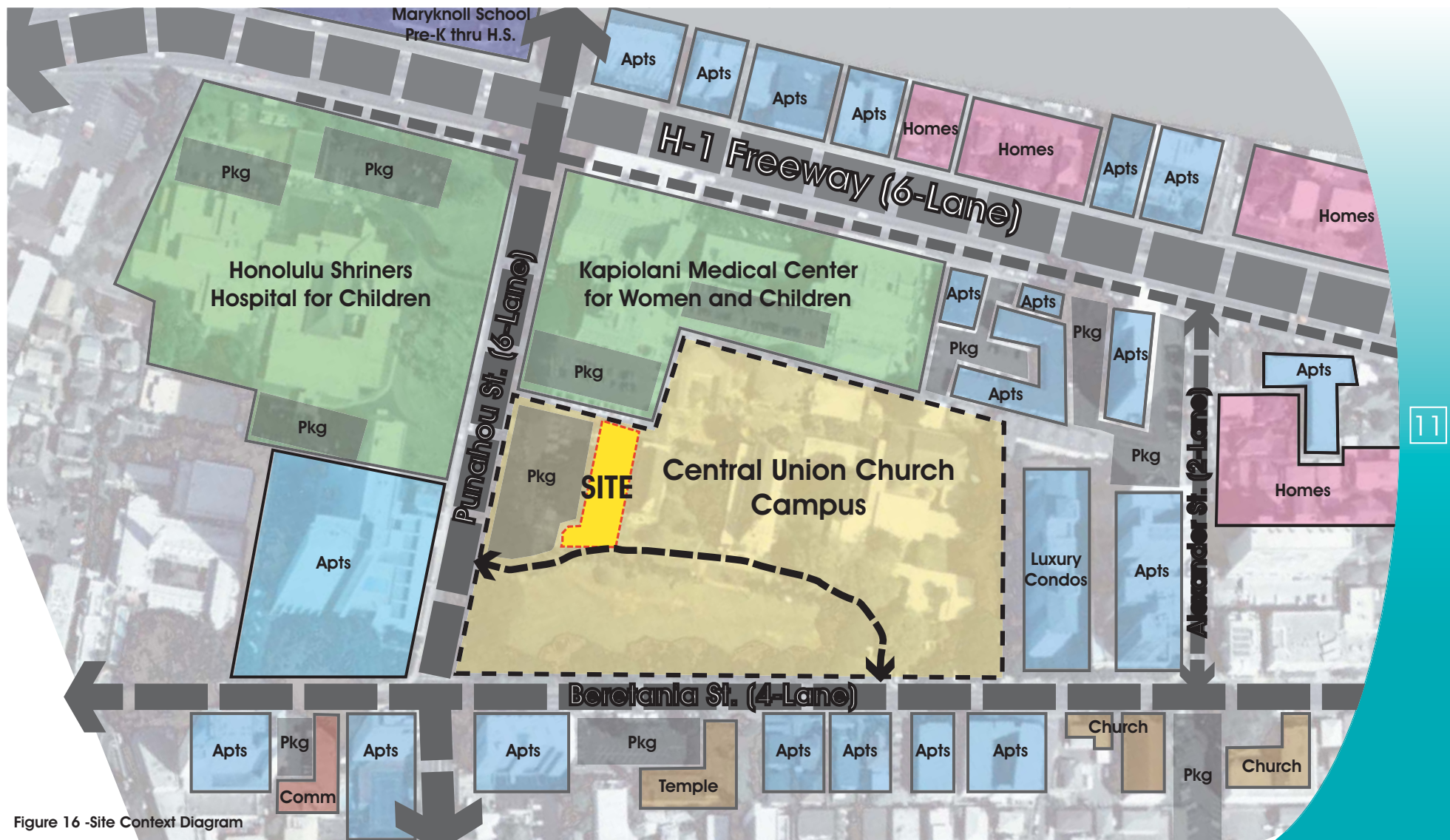
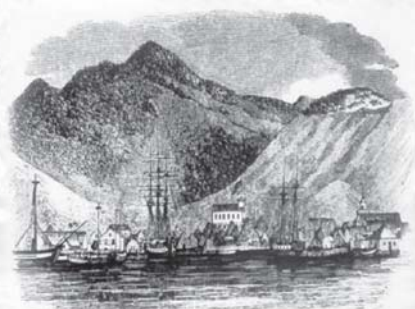


Figure 16 -Site Context Diagram

## Central Union Church History

Central Union Church has a rich history dating back to 1833 with the establishment of the Seamen's Bethel in the Port of Honolulu (Figures 17, 18). It sat on the waterfront for several years attracting more and more English-speaking townspeople who then formed the Bethel Church in 1837 (Figure 19). The numbers of this church grew, and eventually another church formed, Fort Street Church (Figure 21), while Oahu Bethel renamed itself Bethel Union Church. In 1886, a fire (Figure 20) destroyed Bethel Union's facilities, so they combined with Fort Street Church to created Central Union Church. Over the years, Central Union has had a couple of homes (Figure 22), but it found its present home on the corner of Beretania and Punahou in 1920 (Figure 23) formerly the residence and dairy farm of prominent businessman B.F. Dillingham and his family. The corner stone for the sanctuary was laid in 1922, and since then, CUC has done nothing but grow and prosper.

The campus of CUC has several buildings which serve as locations for community programs. CUC's "Family Life Center houses [the] Adult Day Care Center for adults five days a week, [which] is operated by Arcadia Retirement Residence. The Children's Center has classrooms for Sunday School and sponsors events bringing together seniors and preschoolers. The Adult Education Center has six classrooms for distance education and computer learning courses" (Central Union Church, 2002-2004). This new facility is one of the newest additions to the campus and obviously provides many new opportunities for community interaction.



**Figure 17** - 1824 Woodcarving of Waterfront and Seamen's Bethel



**Figure 18** - Seamen's Bethel



**Figure 19** - Bethel Church



**Figure 20** - Honolulu 1886 Map of Fire



## Central Union Church History



Figure 21 - Fort Street Church



Figure 22 - Central Union at Richards Street



Figure 23 - Central Union at Beretania in 1925



Figure 24 - Preschool pool in 1933



Figure 25 - Sanctuary

Central Union is also home to Central Union Church Preschool and Kindergarten (Figure 27), which “has a long and honored tradition in the community” (Central Union Church, 2002-2004). The preschool’s mission is:

*“Central Union Church Preschool and Kindergarten is a Christian-based early childhood program that promotes spiritual, cognitive, socio-emotional and physical growth in a nurturing environment and provides a solid foundation for early learning. Its program of educating the whole child promotes a life-long enthusiasm for learning and provides a smooth transition from home to school...” (Central Union Church, 2002-2004)*

These statements help illustrate how much spirituality is encouraged from the youngest age and continues as they get older and move on to other private institutions in the vicinity.



Figure 26 - Parish Hall



Figure 27 - Preschool and Playground







## Goals

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The following represents the goals to be accomplished. The garden themes are directed toward public appreciation, spiritual healing, and education and interaction.

*The following goals have been deemed necessary when designing these new garden oases:*

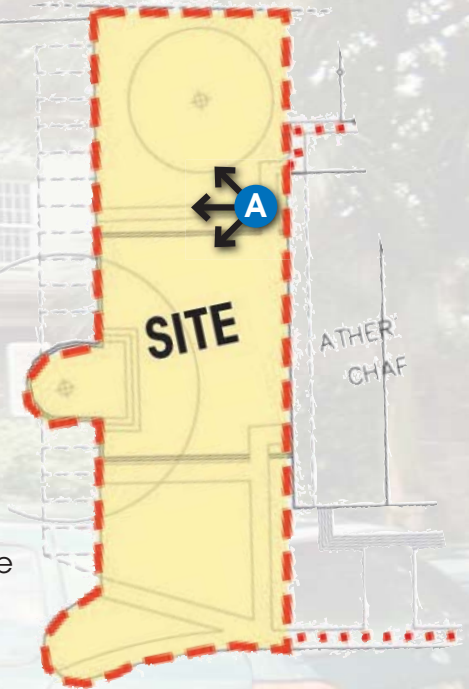
1. A place for contemplation, healing and/or prayer
2. An inviting, interesting, and unthreatening area for people to sit, walk or play in
3. An environmentally responsible garden design
4. An educational environment with emphasis on plant material and church history

## Site Analysis

Dealing with the Central Union Church campus as a whole (Figure 28), there are traffic and noise issues that need to be addressed, as CUC is bordered by Punahou and Beretania Streets, two very busy 6- and 4-lane roads, respectively. In order to ensure safe access to the site, new measures may need to be implemented along these streets in order to assist users as they travel to the garden. Additionally, the noise generated by these 10-lanes of traffic at peak times of day can be quite significant and thus a programming element will work to create buffers, whether they are vegetative or constructed.

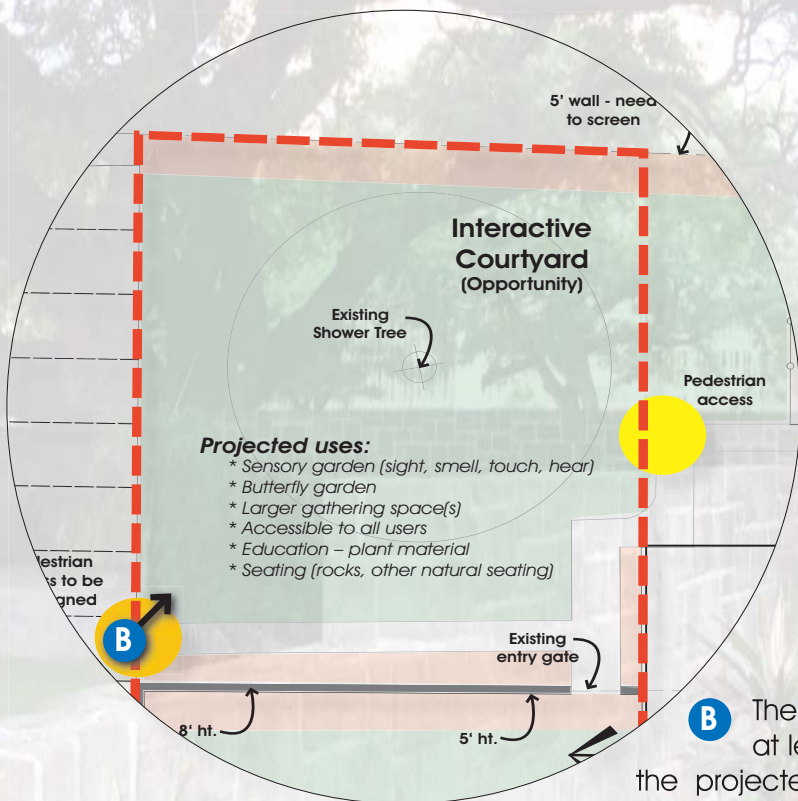
More focused on the actual site now (Figure A), the existing rock wall is an asset on the site that can be used as a focal element for views from different areas within the new garden spaces. Some views into the site that really need to be considered are the view from the existing driveway in front of the chapel, as well as the views west out the French doors of Atherton Chapel. Views that need to be screened somehow are the views that look out onto the parking lot of the church, and the parking structure of Kapiolani Hospital.

The existing plant material may be used again in the new garden, after examining the quality and hardiness of some of the plant material, it may be determined that other plant material may be more suitable. The quality and layout of existing sidewalks are not all conducive to simply leaving them as they are. There are tripping hazards and paths that won't necessarily cooperate with the design of the garden.



**Figure A** - Panoramic view of courtyards from SE corner looking west





**B** The diagram at left explains the projected uses of this courtyard. Some of the present uses of this area include passing through to and from the preschool and parking lot, as well as access to choir robe rooms. The site photo at left (Figure B) shows a view of this courtyard from the SW corner, looking NE.

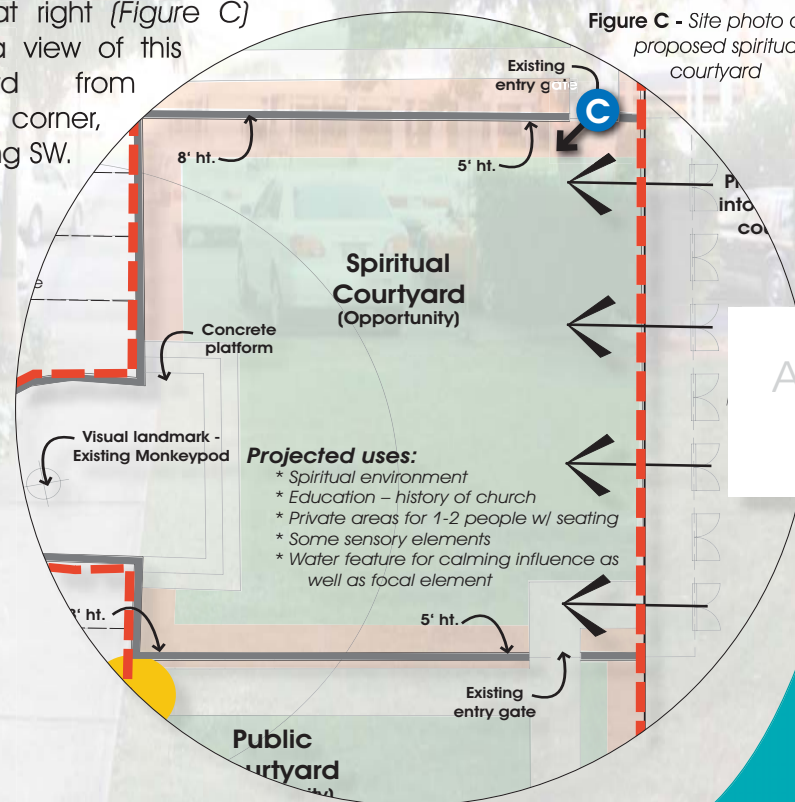


**Figure B** - Site photo of proposed interactive courtyard

**C** The diagram at right explains the projected uses of the new spiritual courtyard. Some of the present uses of this area include receptions after memorial services and occasional counseling sessions for those who desire it. The site photo at right (Figure C) shows a view of this courtyard from the NE corner, looking SW.



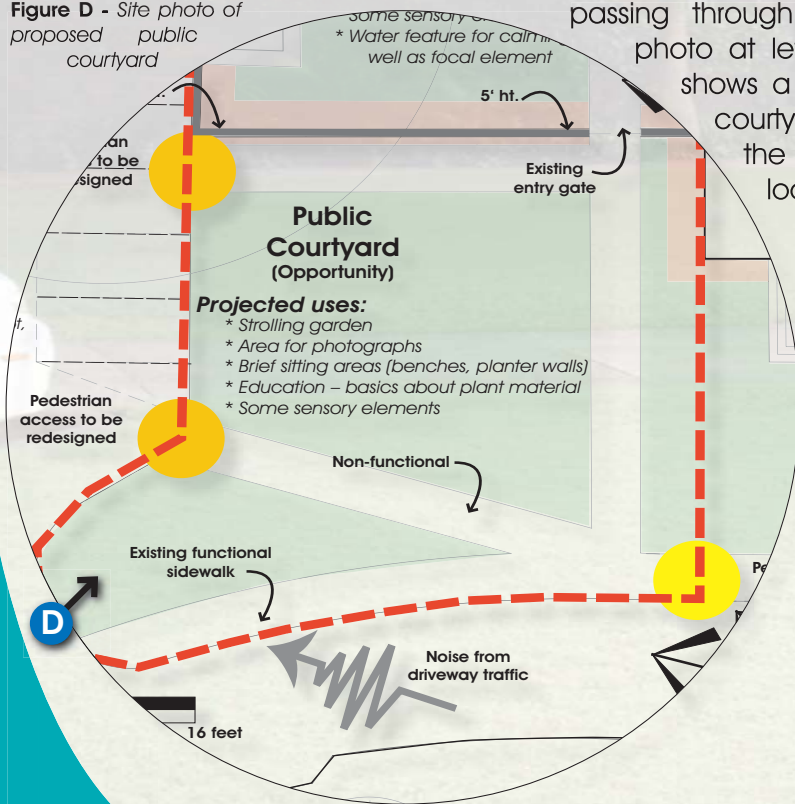
**Figure C** - Site photo of proposed spiritual courtyard





**Figure D** - Site photo of proposed public courtyard

**D** The diagram at left explains what the projected uses of the new spiritual courtyard are. Some of the present uses of this area include a transitional space to and from parking lot and the rest of the church campus, place for brief conversation, and just passing through. The site photo at left (Figure D) shows a view of this courtyard from the SW corner, looking NE.



**Figure 5** - Site photo of proposed interactive courtyard. Screening this parking lot from view will be important when designing the planting areas. Possible solutions are a sculptural wall element or various vertical planting selections.



**Figure 5** - Site photo of the proposed spiritual courtyard. This view shows users congregated in the transitional space between the chapel and the courtyard. This transition should be addressed when laying out the design of this courtyard. Possible solutions include lava rock embedded in the turf or some other sort of stone, in order to draw users further into the courtyard.

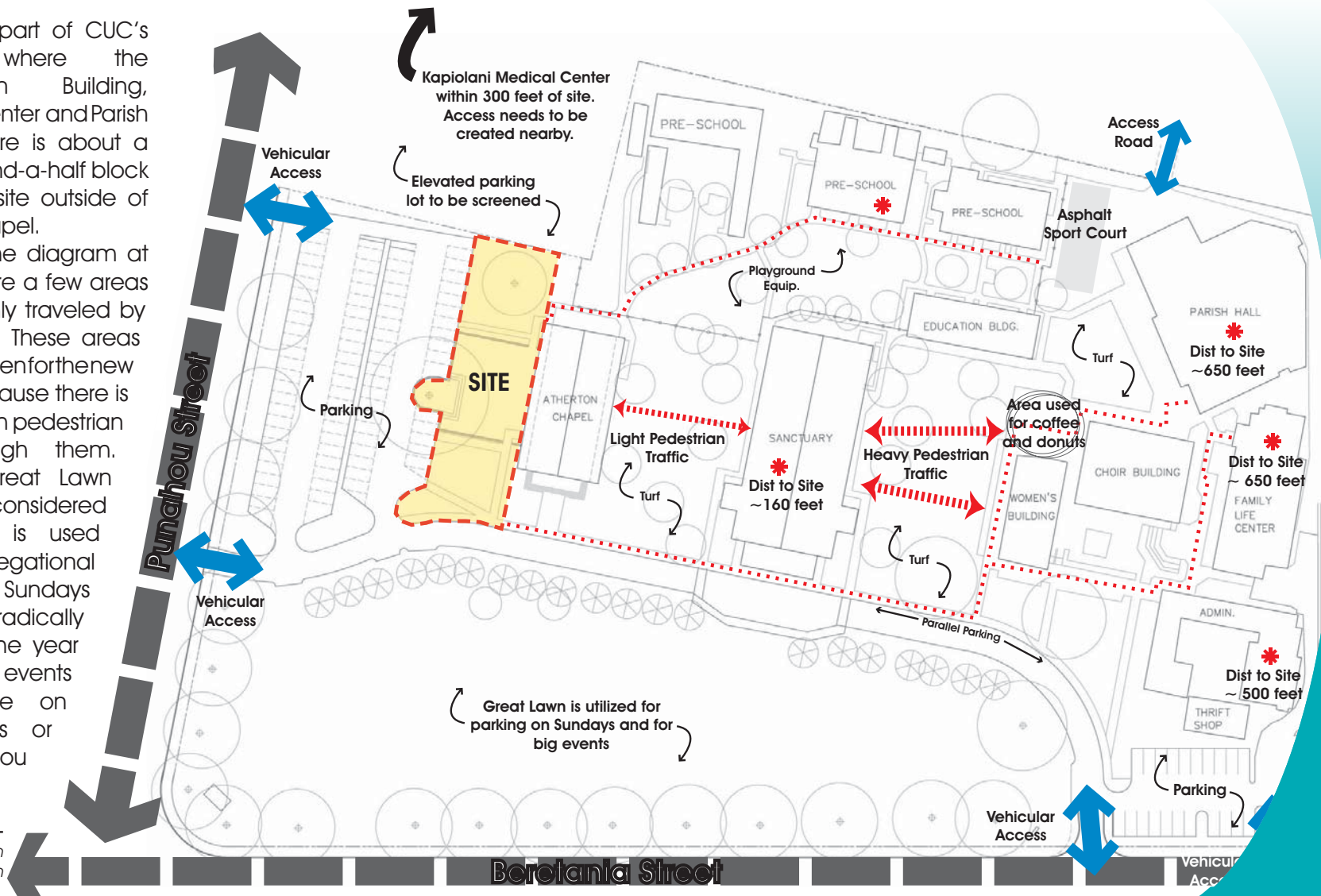


**Figure 5** - Site photo of the proposed spiritual courtyard from inside Atherton Chapel. This is one of several views out into the courtyard that needs to be considered when laying out the design for this courtyard. Possible solutions are sculptural elements, water feature, or other visually interesting elements.



At the east part of CUC's campus, where the Administration Building, Family Life Center and Parish Hall are, there is about a two to two-and-a-half block walk to the site outside of Atherton Chapel. Looking at the diagram at right, there are a few areas that are highly traveled by pedestrians. These areas were not chosen for the new gardens because there is already much pedestrian traffic through them. Also, the Great Lawn was not considered because it is used for congregational parking on Sundays and also sporadically throughout the year for large events taking place on the campus or at Punahou School.

Figure 28 -  
Site pedestrian  
movement diagram







## Program

The garden will be a **Public/Spiritual/Interactive Garden**.

- The garden will be intriguing and usable as a **linear series of garden spaces**. Spaces which will **accommodate groups of varying sizes**, from 1 or 2 users to groups as big as 10 to 15.
- The garden will include public and private spaces for conversations, contemplation, education, relaxation, playing and praying.

### **Themes to include:**

*Educational/Historical* – historic signage about church and community impact

*Spirituality* – plant material based on religious and historic relevance

*Healing* – displays about healing benefits; meandering paths serve as walking loops for patients, families or community residents

*Educational/Ecological* – displays about growth, habit, and water conservation practices being utilized within the garden

- **Water feature** to provide calming effect, and aid in spirituality of the space.
- **Low maintenance** landscape design and **low water usage** plant materials.
- **Seating walls** and **terraced walls** as interesting visual element and interactive element for children.
  - Various spaces within the garden can be **used at all different times of the day**.



## "Organic Emphasis" Concept

### Concept #1

Some of the key features of this concept are the **mass planting areas** (Figure 29) which are important for giving people driving by the garden an idea of the space they are passing, without being too detailed. Another feature is the **photography area** (29) which ideally is a more constructed landscape which sets up specific views to be used for various photographic desires. Next is the symbolic **water feature** (30) in the spiritual courtyard which represents the life of the church, as well as the human life path. An area that needed to be addressed was the **transition zone** (30) between the concrete gathering space outside Atherton Chapel and the turf area. The proposed solution in this concept is flat lava stones laid in the grass, and encouraging exploration of the courtyard. The interactive courtyard's major feature is the **butterfly garden** (31) which would be planted with material that attracts butterflies and other desired insects. The last key feature of the organic concept is the **trellis screen** (31) with vines trained up it to block the views of the unsightly wall of the hospital's parking structure.

- A** Mass planting area
- B** Photography area
- C** Water feature
- D** Transition zone
- E** Butterfly garden
- F** Trellis screening

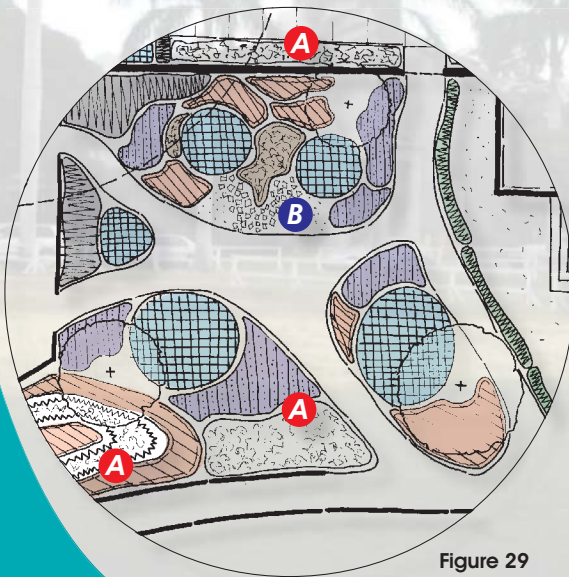


Figure 29

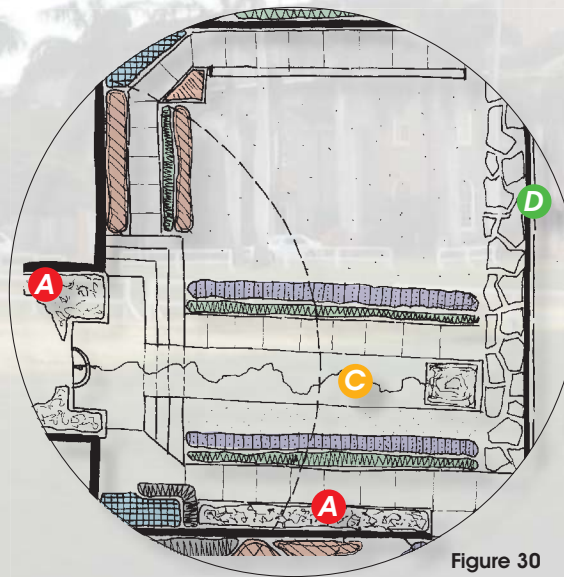


Figure 30

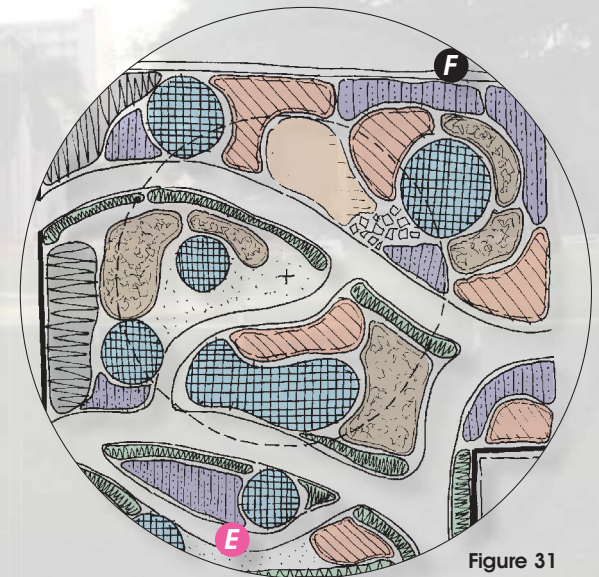


Figure 31

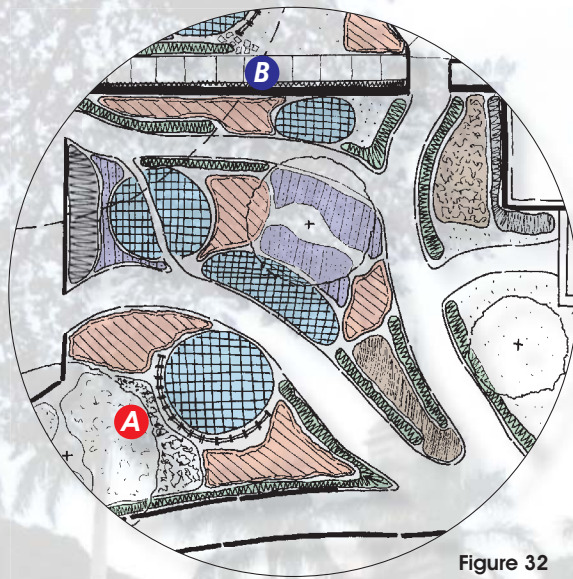


Figure 32

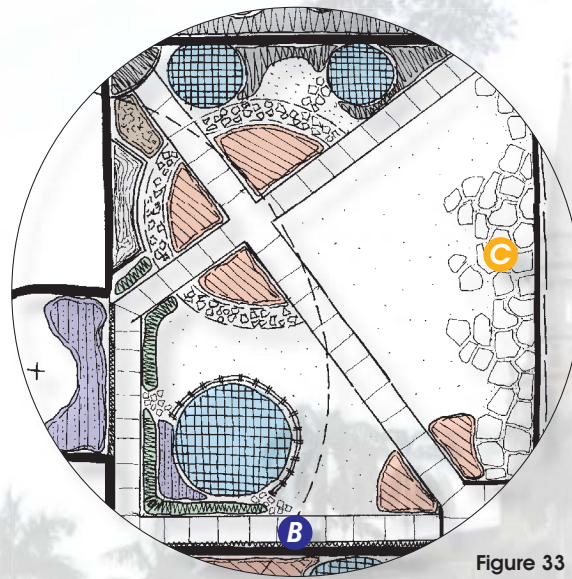


Figure 33

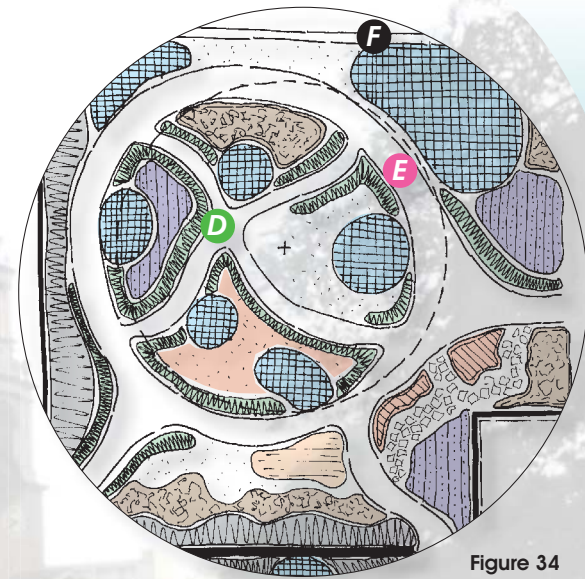


Figure 34

## “Geometric Emphasis” Concept Concept #2

- A** Sloped mass planting area
- B** History wall/walk
- C** Transition zone
- D** Sensory gardens
- E** Exercise loop
- F** Mosaic/education wall

This concept uses the same idea of a **mass planting areas**, (32) except it includes **sloping** these areas slightly to create more visual interest to those passing through. Inside the spiritual courtyard is a **history wall/walk** (32) which chronicles the history of Central Union Church through historic photographs and text displays. The next feature is again focusing on the **transition zone** (33) from the chapel to the courtyard, again lava stone has been used as the material. In the interactive courtyard, one of the main features will be a series of small **sensory gardens** (34). Each of the spaces would focus on a different scent and have information about the chosen plant material. Another feature in this courtyard, which would help address all possible users, is the **walking loop** (34) which covers most of the courtyard. It would offer a place for patients and families to stroll with others and put their minds at ease. The last element in this concept is the **mosaic wall/education area** (34), which helps to screen the view of the hospital parking lot, but also serves as an area that the teachers can bring their children to teach them about items in the garden, or let it serve as a different classroom setting.





## Schematic Design

### Interactive Courtyard

The schematic design is primarily based on the second concept, which had “geometric emphasis”. It is laid out in a similar fashion and has many of the same key features addressed previously. The interactive courtyard has a strong **circular geometry** to it and includes a large seating area near the **mosaic/education wall**. Additionally, the “interactive” aspect of this courtyard is experienced through the creation of a play space that includes several different sizes and shapes of **play elements** for children to explore and play on.

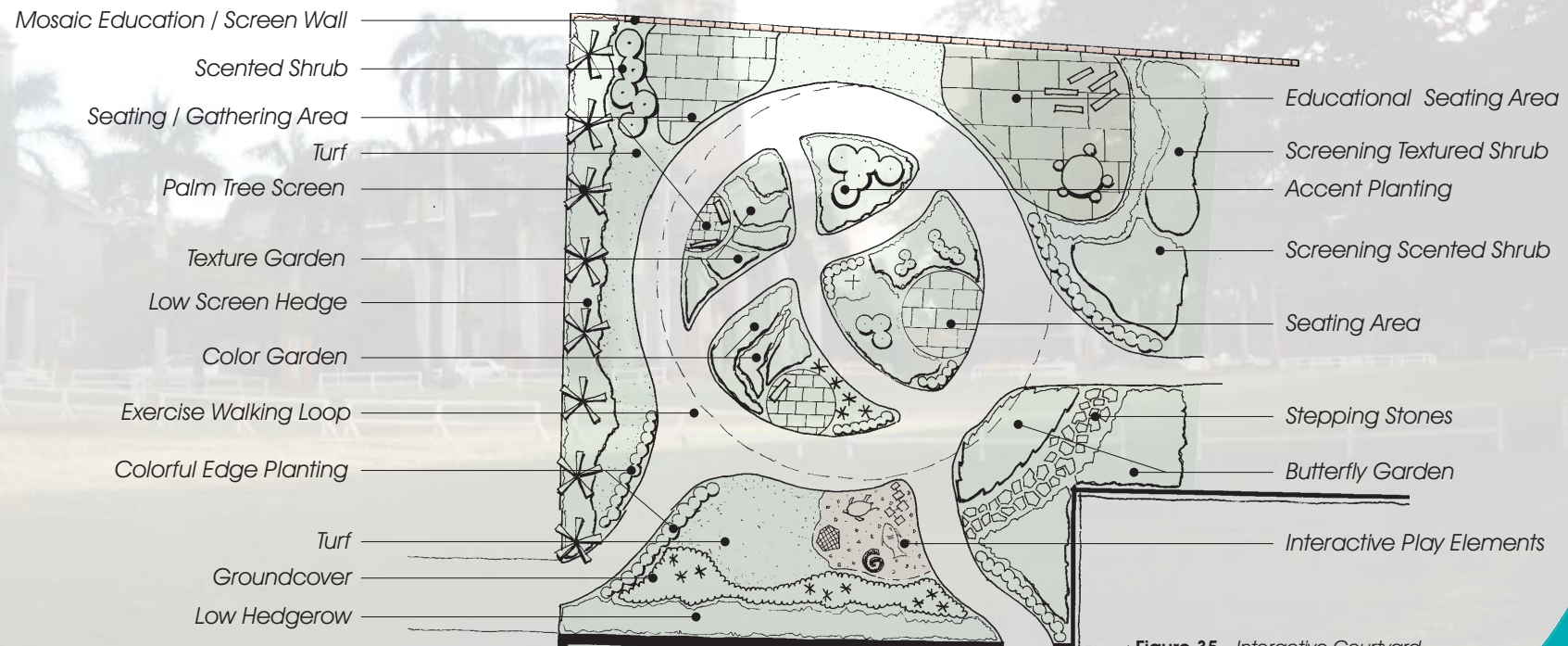


Figure 35 - Interactive Courtyard

## Spiritual Courtyard

The *spiritual* courtyard has a very strong **axial geometry** to it, and there is a subtle **symbolism** with the cardinal directions, implied through the construction of the main pathways in the courtyard. There are two important elements in this garden: the water feature and the history walk. The **water feature** located in the northwest corner of the courtyard serves to cover up some outside noises, as well as a feature that users will appreciate and interact with. The water comes from a spout and will travel beneath the walkway, revealing itself briefly, and then gathering in two small pools to either side of the north/south walkway. The other element, the **history walk**, is one that can be exploited and developed quite deeply and be a focal point for this garden. CUC has a rich history, which has been meticulously documented by the church historians, thus providing ample resources to construct such a feature.

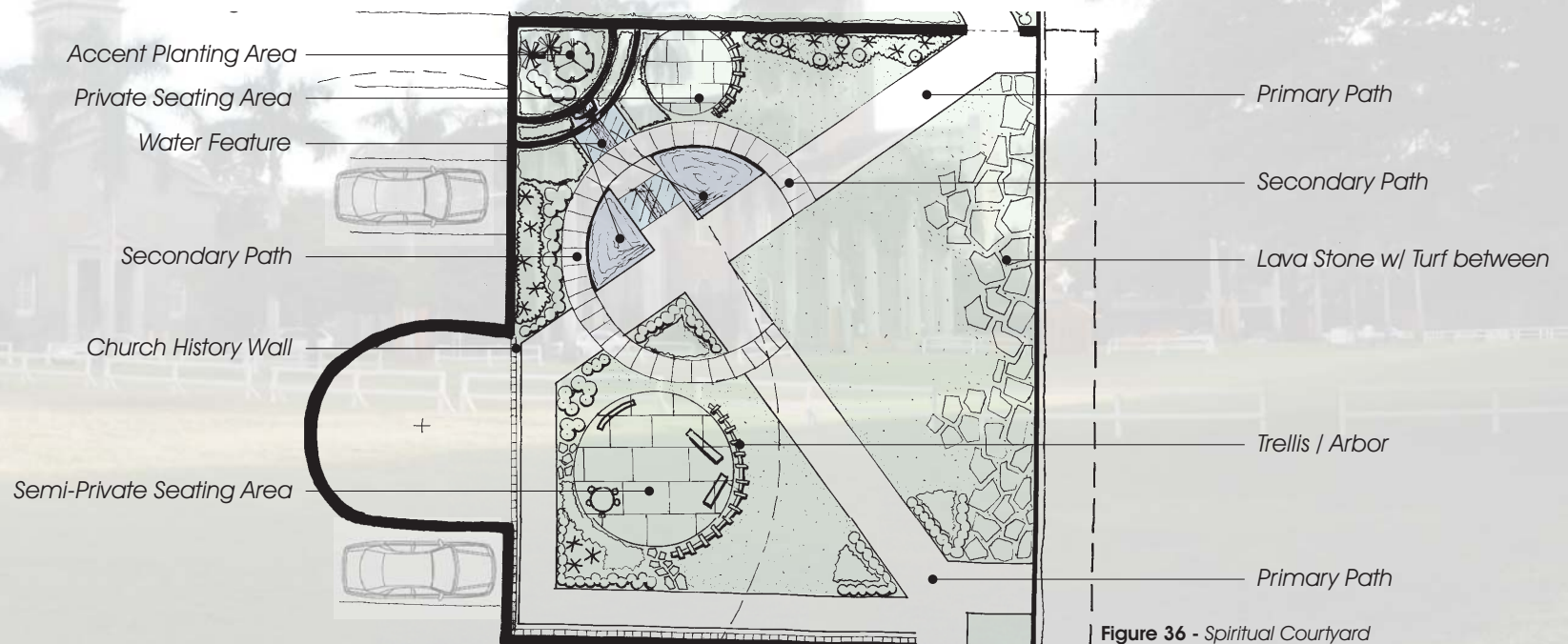


Figure 36 - Spiritual Courtyard

## Public Courtyard

The *public* courtyard uses a **combination** of the two previous geometries. There are two very **axial paths** which intersect a curve that swoops through the middle of the courtyard. The entrances of this **swooping path** are wider so as to create a better **sense of entry** into this new space. There are **three accent trees** which help provide visual interest and attraction for those who might initially pass by and continue walking. There is also an area that is designed with the **photography area** in mind from the previous concept. Additionally there are ample **seating areas** for groups of any size so as to encourage people to stay for a few minutes and enjoy this courtyard. The **sloped mass planting** area is used here to create visual interest and also add a slight buffer for some of the traffic noise nearby.

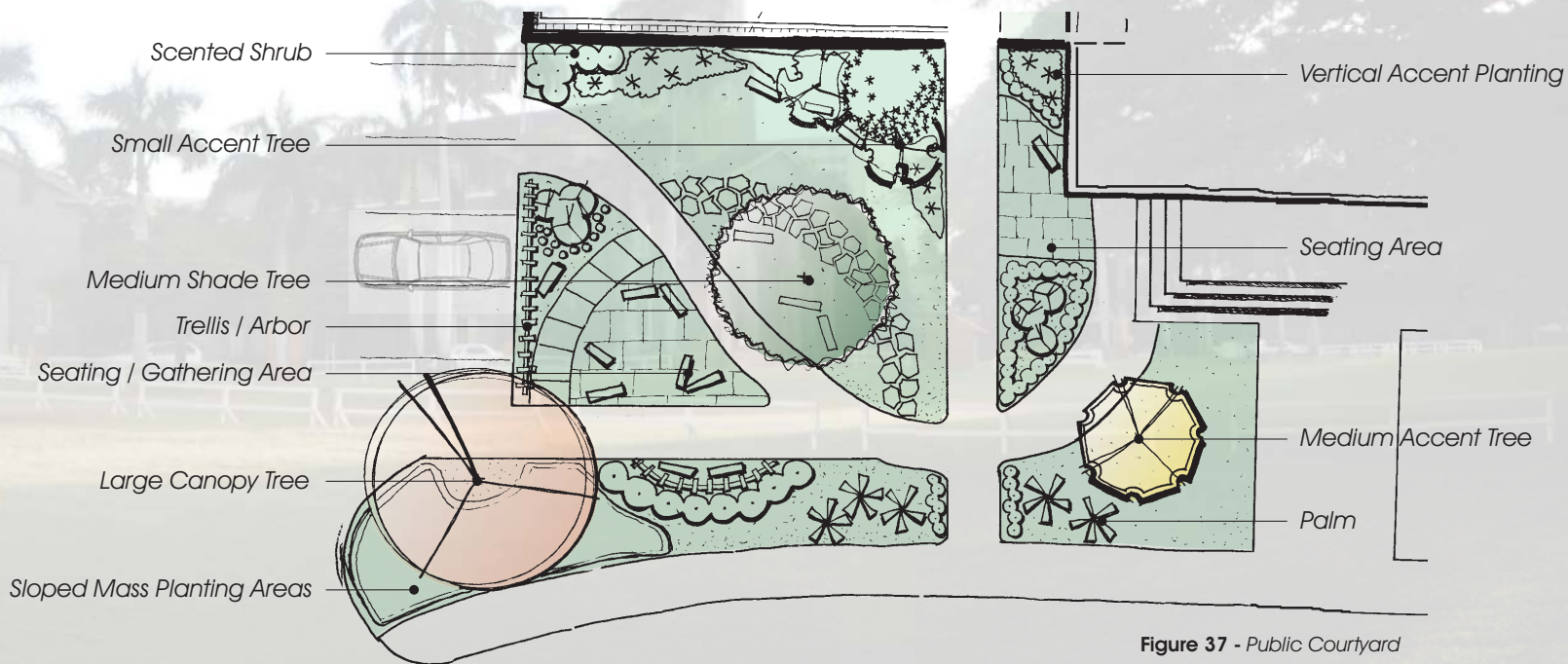
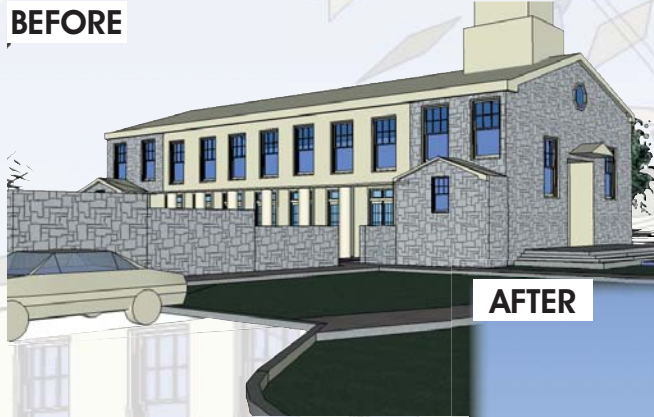


Figure 37 - Public Courtyard



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**Figure 38** - View of public courtyard from the southwest entrance. Some of the amenities visible are the trellis screen, seating areas and a variety of plant material.



AFTER

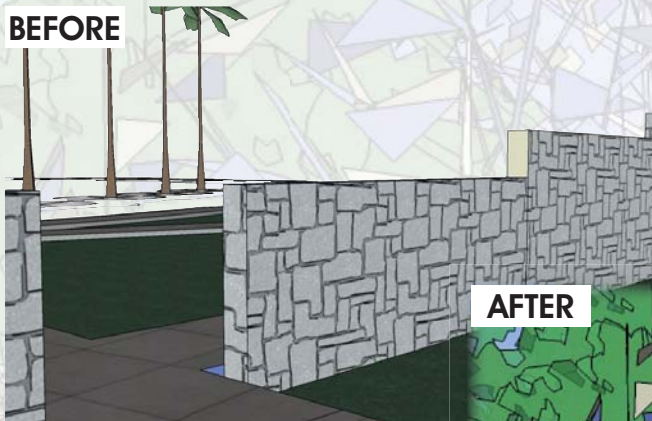


BEFORE



**Figure 39** - View of public courtyard from the south entrance looking toward the spiritual courtyard. Various planting design features help to attract users to this courtyard.

BEFORE

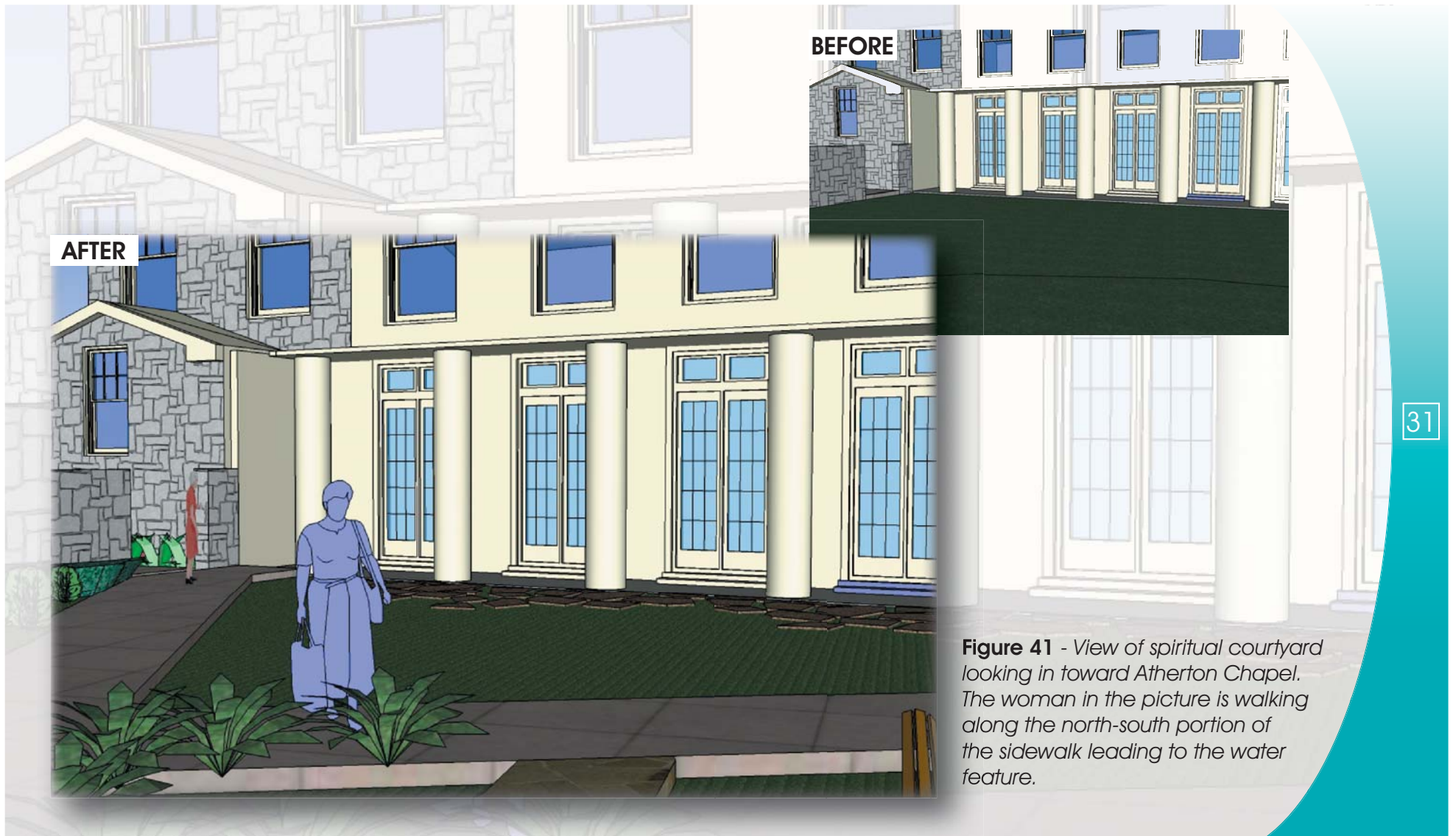


AFTER

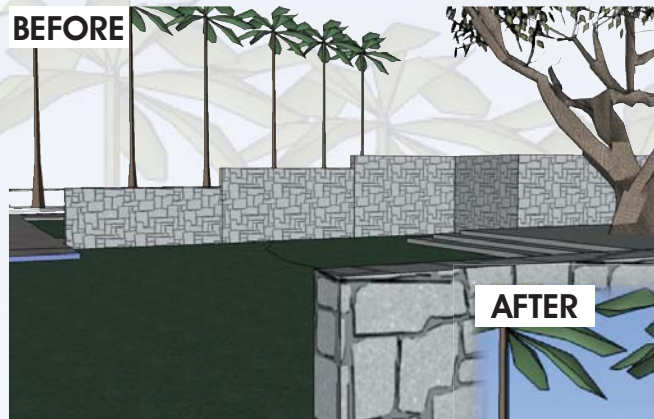


**Figure 40** - View of the history wall with images and text explaining the rich history of Central Union Church. Some of the vegetation of the public courtyard is also visible.





**Figure 41** - View of spiritual courtyard looking in toward Atherton Chapel. The woman in the picture is walking along the north-south portion of the sidewalk leading to the water feature.



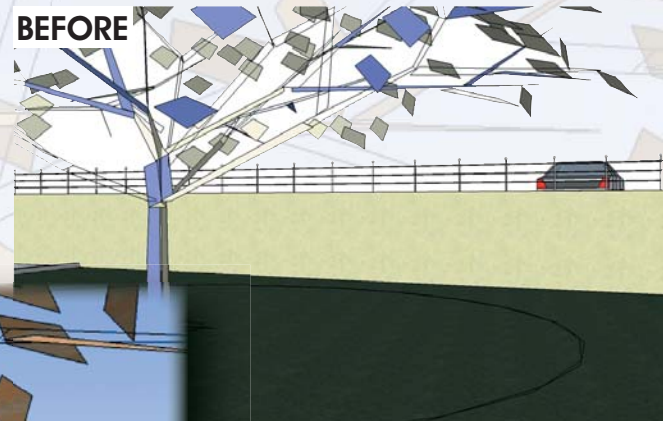
**Figure 42** - View of spiritual courtyard looking over the northern wall. Amenities shown in the photo include the history wall, seating areas and a trellis screen.



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**Figure 43** - View of interactive courtyard looking north. A variety of plant material is visible. The mosaic wall and education area are seen in the background.







## ***Conclusion***

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Through the process of brainstorming, researching, programming, conceptualizing, sketching, refining and modeling these new garden oases for Central Union Church have been created. This booklet represents hundreds of hours spent reading, thinking, drawing, re-thinking, and computerizing a vision of spaces where a variety of users, within the church congregation as well as the surrounding community, could come to relax, feel spiritually cleansed, learn something new, play or just sit and reflect.





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